

# South Bay Cities Council of Governments

October 9, 2017

TO: SBCCOG Steering Committee

FROM: Jacki Bacharach, SBCCOG Executive Director  
Kim Fuentes, Deputy Executive Director

SUBJECT: Green Building Challenge (GBC) – next steps

## Adherence to the Strategic Plan

**Goal A: Environment, Transportation and Economic Development.** Facilitate, implement and/or educate members and others about environmental, transportation and economic development programs that benefit the South Bay.

## Background

The GBC, which started as a pilot in 2015, is a no cost business and property engagement program designed to encourage sustainable business practices. Currently funded by Southern California Edison (SCE), Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas), West Basin Municipal Water District (West Basin), and Golden State Water, the program provides participants with resources to help reduce energy, water, and waste, making the South Bay an even better place in which to live and work.

Between 2015 and 2016, the program focused on business and property owner recruitment and a challenge between these participants. Initially, the program utilized a special on-line platform wherein business and property owners could register, access information on sustainable actions, report their activities, and view their progress compare to other challenge participants. In September 2016, the "contest" portion of the program ended and awards were given at a recognition event.

After this initial competition phase, SBCCOG staff evaluated the program's progress and found that:

- Success in recruiting was primarily due to leveraging community contacts, elected official involvement, and one-on-one meetings with businesses compared to general marketing activities.
- The competition aspect of the program only marginally motivated participants to take action; most activity was gained through SBCCOG staff working directly with business and property owners and identifying specific utility programs in which they could participate.
- The e-newsletter had a good "open rate" indicating that the information was valuable to the participants.
- Implementation of existing partner programs was enhanced by utilizing the robust business data base (i.e. Cash for Kitchens).

- The GBC was one of the best “entry” points established to engage businesses in considering and implementing sustainable practices.

As the end of the program pilot drew near, the SBCCOG began discussions with funding partners. West Basin and Golden State agreed to support the program through Summer 2018, but SCE and SoCalGas, who provide over half of the program funding, stated that their contribution would end December 31, 2017. Based on these budget reductions and the evaluation of the online platform's effectiveness, the SBCCOG staff did not renew the platform software license at an annual program savings of \$24,000.

#### Current Activities

Realizing the value of the GBC, the SBCCOG staff has been preparing recommendations for a new program structure that is less costly and uses fewer staff resources. Staff has reviewed other “green” or “clean” business programs throughout California. All identified programs in California required a cost including the Green Business program in Manhattan Beach. This program is part of the California State Green Business Program/Network and requires an annual cost per city which could range between \$4,000 and \$20,000.

SBCCOG staff also contacted agencies outside of the State that had previously participated in the same on-line platform. A common theme emerged that many of the participants were not proactive in utilizing the on-line platform and it was often difficult to engage the businesses. There appeared to be no difference if the program made use of elaborate tools or special incentives. It was clear that to achieve success, quite a bit of “hand-holding” was required.

#### Proposed New Program

The proposed new program will be drastically scaled back, but still take advantage of the large participant data base of 181 and leverage existing information resources obtained by SBCCOG partners - Metro, LA County Sanitation District, SCE, and SoCaGas. These contracts have tasks that allow or require business owner participation. The West Basin and Golden State Water funding will continue to provide enhanced GBC water resources. Also, the SBCCOG staff will work to identify additional funding sources to support other enhancements to the program.

Beginning January 2018, the proposed new program would be launched with a new name – ***"South Bay Sustainable Green Business Program"***. We would no longer have the abbreviation "GBC", but we do not foresee this being a problem as the acronym did not have wide recognition. The program will continue to be a free resource for business and property owners focused on providing not only information, but also helping them to identify opportunities for increasing their energy, water, and waste efficiency through action. It is envisioned that elected official engagement will still be essential to program success and recruitment of new participants. The main difference between the original and the proposed program, is that access to information will be done through the SBCCOG existing web site, there will be no extensive data collection tracking, and an expensive on-line tool will not be utilized.

Proposed new program benefits in addition to the ones listed above include:

- Support the implementation of the cities' Climate Action Plans
- Position the SBCCOG for future program funding and partnerships
- Maximize staff resources by continuing to maintain and grow a robust business data base to implement partner programs which help the SBCCOG meet program goals

### Proposed New Scope

To join the program, business would make a pledge to operate in a more environmentally-friendly way. The pledge would be an on-line questionnaire accessed through the SBCCOG web site using the RSVP function. Participants would answer questions about their business operations and make selections regarding their interest in a set of sustainable categories. For our 181 existing members, we would need to go back through the information/data already collected to determine if we need additional data but they probably wouldn't have to complete the entire questionnaire. Once enrolled, they would receive a Membership Certificate which they will be able to display.

SBCCOG would use this information to connect participants with partner programs specific to their business. Progress will be tracked through our regular partner program reporting requirements.

Potential categories may include:

- Building information - size, utility bills, equipment, etc.
- Business practice information - employee newsletter, web site, social media, employee green team, etc.
- Existing or interest in environmental policies - green purchasing, rideshare programs, waste reduction programs, etc.
- Interest in:
  - employee education
  - energy efficiency (i.e. lighting, heating & cooling, etc.)
  - water conservation (indoor and outdoor)
  - solid waste reduction
  - air quality and pollution reduction (i.e. transportation to/from work, cleaning supplies, pesticides, etc.)
  - storm-water capture (i.e. rain-barrels, cisterns)

Participant benefits include:

- Publicity/Advertising: Receive recognition via e-newsletter, website, social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), local newspapers, outreach and events, program marketing materials
- Partner program assistance: Referrals to utilities for various programs (i.e. On-bill Financing, Direct Install, Rebates)
- Educational opportunities through partners: Workshops and events
- Recognition: Membership Certificate, SBCCOG's social media, newsletters, web site, etc. and potentially at annual SBCCOG Board meeting (April coinciding with Earth Month) and as appropriately at City Council meetings

### RECOMMENDATION

Recommend to the Board that the Green Building Challenge be continued as the *South Bay Sustainable Green Business Program* as outlined in this memo.

**Prepared with the assistance of: Grace Farwell**